Brooklin June 8. 1879

S.S. meeting

For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God. though not according to knowledge.

For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness. have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. —

Romans 10 — 2. & 3.

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The accusation which Paul here brings against his own people is capable of much wider application. There is a great deal of zeal for God in our own day - not according to knowledge. - Everybody will say that - from whatever point of view they may look out upon the world. - The Romanist will apply it to us, as we apply it to him. - We bear him witness that he is desirous of making the world better - but we say his method is based upon ignorance of the real facts of life. - He looks upon us as benighted creatures who would most gladly serve God, but who have been drawn aside by falsehood and foolishness. - ~~But~~ Every organization is divided upon the question of method. - People who seek the same end with equal sincerity and sometimes differ as to the ways and means to be properly employed. and ~~generally~~ each party brings against the other. This charge contained in the text, that its zeal is not according to knowledge. - But Paul meant something more by these words - than they are usually held to mean in sectarian controversies, - Ordinarily he who uses this expression means to say that his way of serving the Lord is right - and all other ~~way~~ ways are wrong. - - But Pauls' declaration is - that nobody should have ~~any "my-way-way~~ his own way" at all. - The question in his mind lies not between this method and that method of human origin, but between man's way and God's way. - - He accuses the people of Israel not of some difference between him and them, but of going about to establish their own righteousness instead of seeking and submitting to the righteousness of God. - It is a problem much discussed among those who favor extreme individual liberty and yet perceive the necessity for some concert of action - whether there is any standard of rightful authority to which men may be held accountable for the methods through which they expend their zeal. - I suppose it occurs to all of us – whether we bother our heads about it or not, that ~~it views it~~ opinions seem to rule in rather an arbitrary fashion – and without the clearest demonstration of their right to rule; – I and my neighbor ~~B~~ entertain different views as to the proper nature and function of government; – In the absence of any common authority to which we can appeal – how can we determine which is right; and how if I come into official position ~~Off~~ do I acquire any right to insist that my neighbor shall be governed according to my ideas, and against all his own. – The world at large seems to get along on the supposition that might makes right; – If the advocates of one set of opinions can show more votes – or marshal more guns than the champions of an opposing creed – ~~a~~ the majority takes the place of command. – Practically this way of settling differences works well enough – so long as the minority will acquiesce in the arrangement; – i.e. so long as the minority can see some hope that

by peaceful means:-
it may become the majority.- But it sometimes leaves the minority when it has no recourse save revolution - and meantime it is only an arrangement or common understanding - and does not deal with the question of right:-- We agree that for the sake of peace and order the majority shall rule - but we do not agree that the majority must be always right:- Have I any right to sit in judgement upon my neighbors opinions - and call them vicious or foolish - while I know that from his point of view my opinions wear the same sinister hue?- This question has perplexed a great many tender consciences,- but I am not aware that anyone ever came nearer its settlement, than to discover the practical necessity for treating certain opposing theories and views, however honestly and earnestly they may be believed, as harmful and pernicious,-- There are always in the world certain irreconcilable factions - which claim as large a right to follow out the dictates of their reason

and conscience - as other people enjoy; - and the best answer we can make is that in the name of society as we understand the word, they must submit to our rule. -- But now whether or not I have a just pretext for setting up *my* way as a better way than that believed in by my neighbor, I have a right to insist that God's way is better than either. - For under whatever theory or no-theory, men view the world it is evident that all natures bear the impress of a purpose for which they have been created, and are assigned limits within which alone their activities may properly be exercised; - Whether a man acknowledges or refuses to acknowledge the rule of a personal deity - he respects the fate which has deprived him of the power to live in the sea, or fly through the air, and he learns that his mind like his body can only secure health and success by compliance with certain conditions, which he has no power to alter. - We say then that God has designed the human soul for certain purposes, that every organization of human souls is subject to the laws of God, which fix its mission and its rightful methods, and that the only best way of life - is that which fulfills the purpose written in the nature of all created things. — The truth covered by these assertions is one about which there can be no dispute; All men may not see in the limitations or possibilities of life the will of an infinite intelligence but they still respect them as law or fate, and acknowledge that all success depends upon their recognition and careful observance. — When I say there is a way of God upon the earth - I mean for the present simply that man's will is subjected to the law and purpose of the power which has made him and all things what they are. — Now perhaps I have no right to hold my brother accountable for his success or failure in reading this way of the almighty; I may not claim that I have fathomed the designs of the infinite, ~~and~~ or am authorized to declare fully his wishes and his will. — I can only claim to have sought to know ~~to have done it~~ what the will of God is, and I may demand of my fellows that they shall make the same attempt, — whether or not I can ever hold them accountable for their failure to see their duty as I see it — I can hold them accountable for a lack of effort to see their duty as God sees it. — This is what Paul does. — He takes no extreme attitude in charging that the zeal of his people is not according to knowledge, — The ground of his accusation is not the difference in theory or belief between him and them, He calls them to account not for the nature of their opinions — but because they have gone about to establish their own righteousness — instead of submitting to the righteousness of God. — We may well feel delicate about arraigning our fellows for any opinion they may hold — however foolish or extravagant it may seem to us. while they who hold ~~this~~ it are so full an enthusiasm for right and truth. — But we need not feel the slightest hesitation in calling them to account for the vain conceit which leads them to set up some device out of their own heads- instead of looking to see what design is written out for men by creative intelligence;- ~~And~~ Men and women everywhere are filled with this conceit;- They are the exceptional few, who wait to be fully assured what the divine purpose is, and they are the many who- without any ~~[illegible]~~ adequate study of the facts of life- set up in their own minds a pattern of righteousness and go about to establish that;- People whose purpose to do some good in the world is genuine and strong enough,- mistake some whim or prejudice of their own, for the divine ideal- and though they manifest ~~[illegible]~~ the utmost zeal. it is still zeal not according to ~~righteousness~~ knowledge;- It is man's business to assure himself of the purpose for which God created the things with which he has to deal; of the next step in the process of development which God means the world to take, and to use what is put into his hands accordingly. It may be a question after one has tried so to assure himself - how far we are at liberty to discipline him for following out his conception of the right. - But there is no question, that we have a right to prevent him from following out his conscience, when that is swayed or molded by ~~the~~ passion or prejudice or [illegible] superstition, -- Of course no one acts ~~in~~ with entire indifference to the facts of existence; while we all of us without doubt have some mental bias or predisposition, which gives to duty as we see it a peculiar coloring. - But after all it is easy enough to determine whether a man makes it his ruling ~~aim~~ purpose to [illegible] find the end and aim written in the constitution of life itself - or whether he simply constructs an ideal world in his imagination and tries to make the actual world over into its likeness, — Men talk of the speedy overthrow of the Church, and the coming extinction of Christianity. They see in Christian thought only a mass of superstitions and spirit of Christian belief as a great incubus from which the world is almost strong enough to rid itself. It is perfectly evident that such men never have candidly considered the work and mission of Christianity. At the bottom of their anti-christian zeal will generally be found, some personal spite or grievance or some selfish ambition to lead a new reformation. They have sometimes suffered (perhaps unjustly) at the hands of the Church - and ever afterward can only see Christian history through the medium of the slight put upon them; - or they have set out with an iconoclastic spirit, resolved to make the destruction of idols their chief occupation, and so have found nothing but idols everywhere. - I do not hesitate to say that in nine cases out of ten the zeal of the active, avowed foes of Christianity can be shown to originate in some selfish resentment, ambition or prejudice, and not to be derived from any candid study of the Church as a reality which God has established or at least permitted to live - to see if its legitimate work is done; - Any mind which attempts such a study will soon be convinced that the work of Christianity is not yet accomplished - and will I think end in the assurance that its mission is hardly yet begun. - The foes of Christianity are almost without exception, people who never ~~[illegible]~~ tried to read God's purpose in Christian history - but have been led away by hate or passion or some conceit of a shallow imagination. - They furnish us one very good example of what results when men go about to establish a righteousness which they have imagined, instead of seeking the righteousness of God. - In their case as I have said - a personal grievance or ambition generally explains the attitude they have taken, But not always - For there are certain deficiencies of sight, which to a limited extent array people against Christianity, and ~~[illegible]~~ have a very wide influence everywhere in life - in preventing men from ~~[illegible]~~ reading the real purposes of God. -

One of these deficiencies is a partial - sometimes seemingly an entire lack of what might be called a historic sense. - The lack of ability e.g.

to see things in their historic relations - and estimate them by what has gone before and what is to come after them, - This deficiency afflicts the Church quite as deeply as people outside the Church. It is painful to see among Christian sects, such a lack of appreciation of their own history - such a want of perception that the past binds them to any definite present or future. In the political world the same ignorance is manifested. Men generally seem to have very slight perception that the history of a race, a government or a party has any particular significance at the present time. Now this lack of power to see in men and things of to day, the products of influences and circumstances in the past - and in some sense to fulfil the conditions they have inherited, - [illegible] this lack results in two ways. - In the first place it leads ~~us~~ men to think that instead of a choice between a very limited number of roads - the future offers to them a path in any direction, - Individually they think they have power to make their lives whatever they choose; and in all organized work - they have no doubt they can make institutions do whatever they & their fellow agree they ought to do; -- You might just as well preach to precedent and recite history to a brick wall - as attempt to make such people see that God has given to all men and all institutions their special ~~work~~ mission and assigned limits within which they must work. - The character which is the fruit of centuries and ages of effort, they seem to overlook - or if for a moment it attracts their attention, they put it aside with the question - are we not all free men and can we not do what we will? - They forget for example that the ~~only~~ real basis upon which our free institutions have stood for a hundred years is that respect for law and for the constable as its representative - which has been born and bred into the Anglo-Saxon race, They forget that free institutions can stand no longer and go no further, than this respect for law will support and carry them — They do not see that the life of the present day has all its roots in the soil of the past, and can only to some extent modify the forms and complete the promises of earlier times; — If they want paper money — why should they not have it? Suppose the custom of ages has made the precious metals money — what do they care for the custom of ages! — If Society seems not to move with entire smoothness — why not tear up all our written Constitutions — and abolish all unwritten laws, and start Society over again on some new road? — — This want of perception of historic necessities and relations — shows itself in more ways than I have time to indicate; — But let us look at just one other ~~[illegible]~~ manifestation of it. — It not only ~~[illegible]~~ induces men to attempt what all the laws of the world will unite to prevent them from accomplishing. — but it leads them to judge all things by their momentary appearance, whereas seen in their historic setting their true value and meaning may be widely different from their apparent character, — Customs which seem to have slight significance in themselves - sometimes become of immense importance when seen as the vehicle by which something is to be carried over from past to future. - The husk or blade of corn may be worth nothing in itself - but as the support and protector of the ripening grain, it is worth the prospective value of the grain itself. - There is much in the world, which seems not to be worth saving, and which yet is nourishing the germs of future happiness and good, - It is a most delicate and responsible undertaking to decree the destruction of any law or custom inherited from the past, since there is so much likelihood that however superfluous it may seem to be for the moment, subsequent developments may show it to have kept alive just the needed vital spark to kindle a new flame. - We must not forget that poor and barren as the Jewish ritual of Christ's day was - out of those husks of conventionality came the religious genius which sways the modern world, and he who sees what marvellous new births time may bring forth, will be careful not to condemn rashly, what may not seem to him of great present use. The fact that men are so generally - not only ready but eager and anxious to get all traces of a preceding age buried out of sight - shows how dimly they see or feel the continuous thread which binds together all human history. - And if in one direction this failure to estimate things in their historical relations, leads men to overlook their real worth - in another it makes them content with sham values and irredeemable promises. - Any man - any cause - any institution, which appeals to them with fair words - and specious pretenses - may captivate their hearts. -- Here is a Church which professes to love liberty and toleration, and talks in as patriotic fashion as anybody about our "free America," so that men say - What a great blessing to have such a power in our midst. - But if they saw in the light of history - they would know that whatever individuals may profess and sincerely profess of love for liberty - the character of this Church - which has been fixed for a thousand years - makes it the foe of freedom to the end of its days. - Whatever good thing may be said of the Church of Rome and there is much good to be said of it - it must be the enemy of liberty though it stood to the end of time. Whatever may be true of individuals - races and institutions never meet with a sudden change of heart, and in order to estimate ~~their~~ their place and work with any degree of correctness, one must know the character which the past has given them, and consider, that, ~~only~~ at the utmost only some modification of that can be expected in the future. ---- On the whole mankind have been much more given to attempts to set up a righteousness of their own - than to seeking the righteousness of God, - Instead of looking to see ~~what~~ what condition of things God would develope out of the past - and would use to pave the way to a better future, - they cling blindly to that with which they have grown familiar as the ultimate goal of progress or they ~~B~~ try to work out a new future which has no connection with the past – or they use the present for the gratification of their own whims and prejudices, – Instead of asking what part God would have them to perform in the world, they construct a world in imagination to suit their own notions, and live as if this fictitious universe were the real one, and its duties the highest duties of life. – They do not see, or try to see, the purpose which God has stamped upon all things He has made. But content themselves with _inventing_ purposes, which they would like to see fulfilled. They do not conceive the present time as part of an endless process which creative wisdom is carrying forward. But think the world belongs to them to do in it and with it what they please. —— For this, they ought to be held _responsible_, to man's law as well as God's. – For the result of their honest endeavor to read their duty by the light of infinite designs, we must not judge them. – We are all but human – and need as much charity as we can give. – But we may insist that our fellows shall make that attempt,

and we have full liberty to condemn – when it appears that
zeal is governed only by petty and selfish conceit. –

But we have to confess after all that it is not
so easy as we could wish to read the divine meaning
in what has place and exists, – There are facts – and
facts – some of them of ~~but~~ slight consequence – others
pregnant with significance; We ~~cannot~~ cannot proceed
upon the supposition that whatever is – is right; – Some
things and some events are clearly wrong, if our moral
sense is to be trusted at all; and there is no use trying
to discover in them any disguised blessing, – How
then shall we determine upon what facts or phenomena
we ought to rely – as an indication of the divine purpose?
Amid a bewildering perplexity of signs and portents –
how shall we select the real signs of the times which
show what way God means the currents of events should
flow? – – We must divide the facts of life into two
classes – Natural and Spiritual, and we must still
further narrow the number of those who put their

lives to the best uses,- by saying that among the comparatively few who strive to grasp God's ~~[illegible]~~ plan for the future - the larger portion see ~~[illegible]~~ mostly the superficial material facts and indications, and that they who have the depth of insight to discern the meaning of spiritual tendencies are few and these the few ~~[illegible]~~ leaders of a generation,- The merely external facts of life give very slight hint of any settled future course, But there are deeper currents ~~of life~~ always flowing underneath the surface - and he who can take their ~~a~~ force and direction knows how to predict the coming time,- What we call public opinion is as fickle and uncertain as the wind, hot to-day - cold. to-morrow, now blowing from one quarter with a strength and persistence which seem to promise great results - but & ~~[illegible]~~ suddenly falling into calm - or veering to an entirely different direction,- But while all this takes place above the surface - below are tides of thought and feeling which hold their course from age to age, and in their flow is written the real work which this day has to do and the nature of the times that must succeed.-

The time-server who shapes his course by public opinion, will be like a ship which can sail only before the wind, and it will be only by a most fortunate chance that he ever reaches any haven, or accomplishes even the most selfish purpose. - In a country like ours, where so many men set out to reach high official station, and entirely miss their mark, because they know no way of advancement, save by trimming their sails to catch every breeze of popular opinion - this truth needs no illustration; - On the other hand - with the recently closed life before our minds - of one who years ago - almost alone and in the midst of ridicule and abuse, took up the work which has proved to be the great work of God in this century - and which he lived to see completed, - it ought not to be difficult to make our hearts understand the corresponding truth that whosoever, in the face of all outward difficulties and discouragements - will find and adhere to some spiritual current of existence - will find himself ultimately borne on to the highest success that can be won -

This time like every other time - contains within itself the forces which are working out coming events.- To one who sees only superficial facts - the modern world might seem fast breaking up.- ~~It~~ Into such a babel of confusion are we fallen, that all demagogues and trimmers are at their wits end, and nearly driven to distraction in their endeavors to catch the ever veering winds, and find at last some steady breeze.- But still underneath goes on the everlasting work of God, and well for us, if we can here and there find tokens ~~and traces~~ of its scope and aim.- In the religious world - there are signs of the opening of a new era of growth and power. - and traces of a steady flow of religious sentiment, away from theological "isms" and toward a more genuine christianity which shall consist in personal loyalty to the character of christ, There are perhaps as many dogmatists as ever, and continually there arises some new star in the theological firmament, heralding the discovery of the perfect and saving theology at last,- And because ~~they~~ Such do not win any permanent following — because the world listens to him for a moment of half interested and half amused, and then drops them suddenly out of sight, many think the religious instincts and feelings of ~~the~~ Christendom are growing cold and going to decay, — It is not so — any man who by his lips or in his life can show forth the beauties of the character of Jesus of Nazareth, to whatever religious sect he may belong, is wielding a growing power, and to any man with eyes the evidences are clear as daylight that below all sectarian lines there is a drift of the time toward a great revival of genuine Christian thought and feeling, —

In the political commercial and industrial world there is outward chaos, — It is nation against nation — class against class, — — men rioting in luxury here — and starving in penury there, — The world ~~is~~ seems filled with artisans who lack work — merchants who lack honesty — statesmen who lack principles! How does all this indicate the progress of society toward a better future? – From this outward snarl of things how shall we pick out any hint of a work of good going forward which we may assist? – But though there is much that bodes no good for the immediate future, we are not without evidence that a better ~~future~~ condition is shaping itself steadily and quietly underneath the surface discord. – He who takes the trouble to look underneath the crazy fancies and sophistries which are grouped together under the name of socialism, for example, will find in the hearts of the people a blind and dumb ~~instinct~~ movement which knows not yet its own destiny – but which shall yet organize the world's industrial work – in a much more perfect way – and in much more accord with equity – than anything to which we have as yet attained. – Outwardly we see the industrial world rent by faction, and the time-servers and place-hunters – true to their instincts are fomenting the strife, But deeper down flows an organizing current which is slowly finding its way to that peace which embodies a higher justice than that which has hitherto ruled the earth. Let Russian despotism keep on with its vain attempt to stamp out socialism, and let the wise men of America see that it is not something to be killed, but something to be educated,— Under the hideous mask it wears— there will be found ultimately the fair face of a divine purpose, a purpose to bring the ~~[illegible]~~ people out of a forced and into a voluntary union with the very social forces against which they now make war,— Socialism means at bottom, the reaching out of the laboring mind, for some better organization of the Nation's industry. It looks for the common good,— and though so much of its zeal is now utterly unguided by knowledge, it indicates one of those great movements of mind which God directs by a wisdom higher than man's.—— It is our part to expose as far as possible the fallacies and delusions which always grow out of such a movement, and to teach the people the real purpose of the mighty impulse which is so fast taking possession of their hearts.—

God hath chosen the ~~[illegible]~~ foolish things of this world to confound the wise— and weak things to confound the mighty; declares the great Apostle. — What does this mean — but that God works beneath the superficial facts of life — by means of spiritual laws and forces, which escape the general observation. — We live for the most part with our attention fastened upon material things. — These are what appear great in our regard, and unless we search for the hidden streams of tendency which control the shifting scene before our eyes — the few instances in which they come to the surface will appear weak and trivial. — But when we do learn that these apparently weak and foolish things chosen by God are really manifestations of the great tides which control all life — and that the things which most engross us are really but straws floating upon a current of spiritual forces, — is there not in this lesson a truth which meets and satisfies ~~addresses itself~~ a deep longing of the individual soul? — For is not the head in its pride — full as it is of worldly wisdom and conceit, always saying to the heart, that its dreams of love and heaven — its spiritual instincts and ambitions are weak and foolish fancies? And what shall be the hearts reply? - Shall it not answer that what the intellect has called weak and foolish - has been proven again and again wisest and strongest, - that engaged as it is with material facts - the head does not know the meaning of those spiritual facts which the heart detects? The life of Christ is only the supreme among numberless examples, of the triumph of what worldly wisdom has condemned - and with all history before our eyes filled with illustrations of the truth that the spiritual life of man, is the profoundest ~~mightyest~~ mightiest energy within him, - the heart may confidently assert that its dreams and ideals - unreal as they may seem to the reason in comparison with material things, are yet truer and wiser than much that lies within the reach of intellectual proof.

It is here then in ~~this~~ these deeper facts of life that we are to find the divine purposes which are predestined to victory. - Here are we to look for ~~the~~ some picture of the righteousness of God - to hold up before a world which still goes about to establish its own righteousness.-- With mere matter of fact common-sense on one side - depending wholly upon what hints of the future it can glean from surface shows.- and a spurious transcendentalism on the other which holds the promptings ~~[illegible]~~ and pictures of its own mind to be superior to all fact.- We are to stand loyal to the highest order of facts God has made and find in them our revelation of the true righteousness;- To do this we shall not always find ourselves, in accord with the prevailing spirit of the time, But on the other hand we shall not always be called upon to suffer martyrdom, One very false inference drawn from the past is, that because the world has stoned so many of its prophets- therefore every prophet must be stoned, and nobody ~~who~~ unless he contrives to call down upon himself the public scorn - can be a prophet;- It was only a faction of the Jews which put Jesus to death, the common people heard him gladly.- And he who can speak out of some perception of the deep things of life declaring man's duty as he sees it in God's purposes, will always find listening [illegible] ears, — But whether the world heeds us or turns away from us - for the time being - is none of our concern, —. Our business is to seek some knowledge of the divine plan - from the things in which that plan is written, and by word and deed proclaim that as the true standard of human duty - sure that if not to-day nor to-morrow yet at some time the world will be brought to acknowledge that as the rule of its thought and action, —